July 16, 2003

The Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project

The Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project (ENLRP) is a component of the multi-state Great Basin Restoration Initiative in eastern Nevada. The purpose of the ENLRP is to develop consensus on the overall health of the Great Basin in eastern Nevada and implement actions to restore the health of the land. The ENLRP implements the objectives of the Great Basin Restoration Initiative (GBRI), which include: protecting healthy, functioning ecosystems; restoring degraded landscapes with high potential; developing a common basis for problem combining finding and resources on identified priority areas; capitalizing on external partnerships; and promoting scientific research and studies. Implementation of the ENLRP is intended to restore and maintain ecosystem health on a landscape-scale basis through collaboration efforts.

The vegetative communities of the Great Basin have changed significant over time. Modern uses, such as aggressive fire suppression and land management practices, combined with long-term climatic shifts and the introduction of noxious weeds and exotic species, have changed the conditions of the Great Basin ecosystems. These changes have led to steadily increasing fuel loads, increased fire intensity and size and subsequent loss of soil productivity, loss of species diversity, deterioration of watersheds (I.e., soil erosion and reduced water quality), and the invasion of exotic species and noxious weeds. Restoring the Great Basin landscape in eastern Nevada is an opportunity we must take in concert with collaborative partners and local communities.

The proposed project area encompasses approximately 10 million acres that are managed by the Ely Field Office. There are approximately 4 million acres of pinyon-juniper woodlands, 2 million acres of pinyon-juniper/sagebrush communities, and approximately 2.5 million acres of sagebrush communities. The remaining 1.5 million acres include valley bottoms and mixed conifer forests. Additionally, 188 miles of stream riparian habitat and 7,800 acres of riparian habitat associated with meadows, seeps, springs and wetlands exist within the proposed project area. There are tens of thousands of acres of public land infested by noxious weeds and invasive species and millions of acres are at risk. These noxious weeds and invasive species include whitetop, tamarisk, dalmation toadflax, knapweeds, cheatgrass, halogeton and Russian thistle.

To maximize restoration capability and success while achieving mutual goals, the Ely Field Office has formed an external partnership with approximately 75 independent, non-governmental partners. The Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition (ENLC) is a community based partnership with members representing agricultural, conservation, cultural, environmental, scientific, private enterprise and other interests. The partners will help the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) implement decisions on public land in eastern Nevada. The coalition's function is to build partnerships, conduct fund raising,

establish broad-based goals and objectives, offer advice, and provide science. The BLM and other federal agencies will work with the ENLC through a cooperative agreement.

The overall goal of the Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project is to restore healthy ecosystems. Doing so will improve and/or maintain habitat, watershed stability, riparian areas, species diversity and composition, and cultural values. The purpose of the ENLRP is to develop a consensus on the overall health of the Great Basin in eastern Nevada, and to implement actions to restore the health of the land. Short-term (less than 5 years) actions include collaborative partners and landscape teams developing and implementing planned actions on a landscape basis. Long-term (5 years or greater) actions include a regional assessment (to include a cumulative impact analysis) to develop for eastern Nevada.

The ENLRP supports the GBRI goal of restoring ecological stability to the Great Basin. This project will ensure that the best available science is applied through an adaptive management process, allowing for adjustments to be made.